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Therapeutic Tapping (aka Emotional Freedom Technique)

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Summary: Therapeutic tapping (aka Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)) is a technique for helping with stress and anxiety that involves tapping on acupressure points on the body.

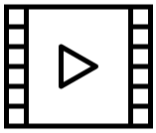
Introduction

Therapeutic tapping is a technique that may be helpful in conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression (Church, 2012; Feinstein, 2012; Clond, 2016).
It involves using your fingers to tap on various points on the head and upper body.
Evidence for therapeutic tapping is still growing. There is less evidence for therapeutic tapping compared to other evidence-based treatments such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) or medication.

On the other hand, advantages include:

- It can be easily learned
- You can do therapeutic tapping on yourself or on a loved one (such as a child or youth); I
- It doesn't cost anything (compared to treatments such as psychotherapy)
- It carries no side effects (compared to treatments such as medication).

How to do Therapeutic Tapping



Here is a video that shows how to do therapeutic tapping: “How to Tap with Jessica Ortner: Emotional Freedom Technique Informational Video”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAclBdj20ZU

Therapeutic Tapping in 5 Steps

Step 1. Identify the issue
What is the issue or fear that you are focusing on?
My issue / fear is _____ (e.g. anxiety, stress, worry about exams, etc.)
Note that sometimes, your issue is related to another person's behaviour. But you can't change other people's behaviours, only your reaction. So if your issue is "my boss acts like a jerk", you can't change that -- however, you can try to improve your reaction, "My issue is staying calm when my boss is challenging."
2. How severe is the stress?
Ask yourself, between 0 and 10, if 0 is no stress and 10 is the most stress, how stressful is the issue? This helps you see later on, if the tapping has been helpful or not.
3. The setup
The "setup" is where you have a phrase that summarizes the issue you are trying to address -- it has two parts:

- Acknowledging the issues
- Accepting yourself despite the problem

The common setup phrase is: "Even though I have this [fear or problem], I accept myself."
Write down set up phrase below:

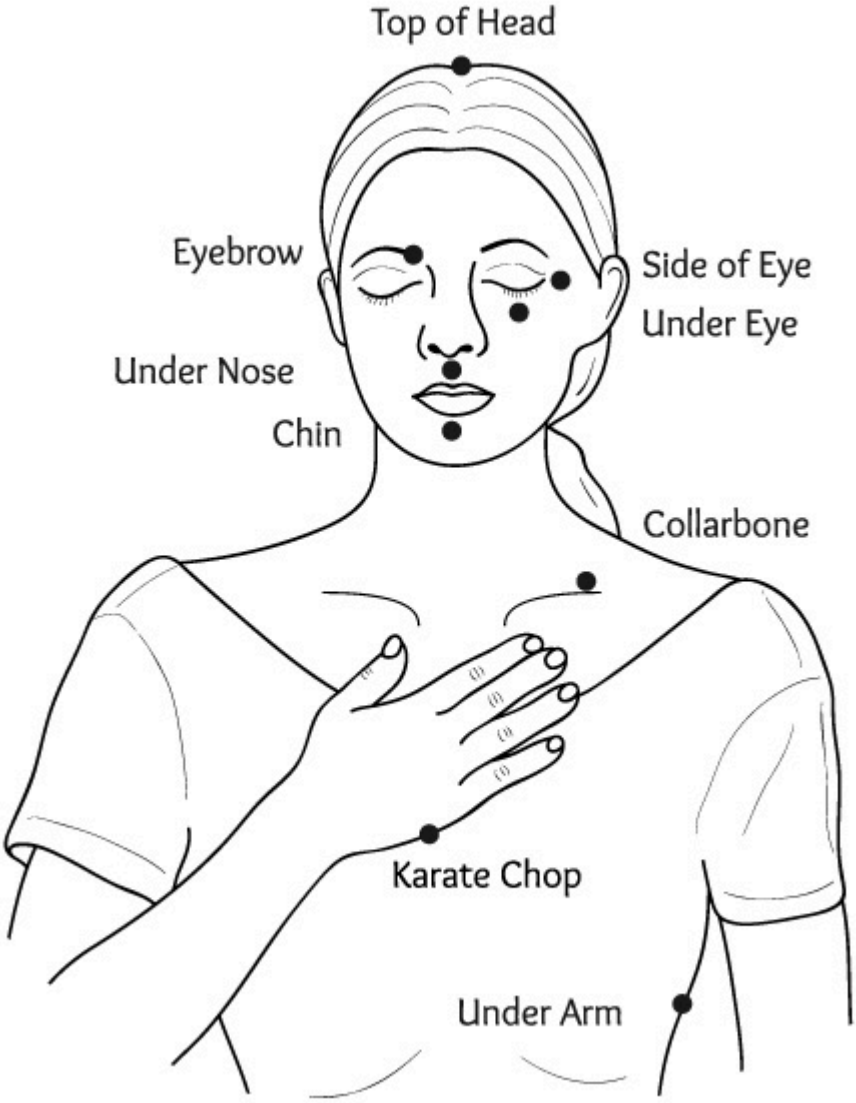
Problem acknowledgement	"Even though I have this problem with _____"
Positive affirmation	"I love and accept myself…" Insert any other positives you want to reinforce here as well…

4. Tapping sequence
Tapping sequence is where you tap through the various acupressure meridian points.
While tapping each point, say your reminder phrase -- the reminder phrase is just a quick phrase that reminds you about what you are working on.
So if your problem / affirmation phrase is this:

- "Even though I have anxiety when I leave my house, I accept myself,"

Your reminder phrase could simply be "the anxiety…"
My reminder phrase is _____
Recite this phrase at each tapping point.
Repeat two or three times.
5. Rate your stress/ distress level
After doing a sequence of tapping, rate your stress/distress from 0 to 10.

Diagram of Tapping Points



Where to Find Therapeutic Tapping

Are you interested in seeing a health care professional for therapeutic tapping?
Therapeutic tapping is not as widely known as other types of evidence-treatments plus there are many who are skeptical about the technique.
Nonetheless, there may be health professionals that offer therapeutic tapping in your area. It is generally recommended to seek out services from registered health professionals (e.g. social workers, psychologists, registered psychotherapists). The reason for this is that if you have problems with services, then you can contact their regulatory college or body in order to have your concerns addressed.

Summary

Therapeutic tapping is an intervention that may possibly be helpful for stress and anxiety. It does not have the same evidence base as other treatments, but it is simple and easy to do, and worth trying to see if it might be helpful in your situation.

References

Church D. et al.: Brief Group Intervention Using Emotional Freedom Techniques for Depression in College Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial, Depress Res Treat. 2012; 2012: 257172. Published online 2012 Jul 17. doi:

10.1155/2012/257172
Clond Morgan: Emotional Freedom Techniques for Anxiety, J. of Nervous and Mental Disease: May 2016 - Volume 204 - Issue 5 - p 388-395. doi: 10.1097/NMD.0000000000000483
https://journals.lww.com/jonmd/Abstract/2016/05000/Emotional_Freedom_Techniques_for_Anxiety__A.9.aspx
Feinstein D: Acupoint stimulation in treating psychological disorders: Evidence of efficacy. Review of General Psychology, 16, 364-380. doi:10.1037/a0028602

For More Information

EFT International
https://eftinternational.org/d...
Evidence-based EFT
https://www.evidencebasedeft.c...
Website of Gary Craig, the founder of the 'Emotional Freedom Technique'
https://www.emofree.com/
Jennifer Ortner
Video demonstrating therapeutic tapping.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAclBdj20ZU

About this Document

Written by the eMentalHealth Team.

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